(d) whether it is proposed to constitute an authority to regulate all airlines;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the details therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No such specific complaint has been received in recent past.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

(f) The airlines are already operating in highly competitive market. It is the Government's view that the market forces should be allowed full play for better passenger amenities at competitive prices. Further, passengers can approach existing consumer courts for any deficiency in service.

Revival of Cooch Behar Airport

2825. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the aerodrome in Cooch Behar (West Bengal) lies deserted even though it could have served a large number of people of the region;

(b) if so, what steps are being taken to revive it; and

(c) whether there is any proposal or plan to resume air service from the aerodrome and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The airport at Cooch Behar is not operational for more than a decade due to unwillingness of any airline to operate regular services to Cooch Behar. However, since some of the airlines have evinced interest to extend their services through Cooch Behar, development work for strengthening and extension of runway has already been awarded and is likely to be completed by March,

2006 subject to acquisition of land by the State Government. Work for modification of terminal building and associated facilities is likely to be taken up by October, 2005.

(c) Commencement of air services would be contingent on completion of various development works and commercial decisions of airlines.

Free tickets on compassionate grounds

2826. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the facilities being provided by Indian Airlines (IA) and Air India (AI) to senior citizens, women and serious patients including handicapped persons;

(b) the number of free tickets given by Air India/Indian Airlines on compassionate grounds to patients suffering from serious ailments during the last three years and till date;

(c) the criteria adopted for providing such facilities;

(d) whether the above mentioned category of persons have made any demand either to the Airlines or Government; and

(e) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Air India grants 55% concession on domestic fares to active Military Services personnel, cancer patients, blind persons and senior citizens. Indian Airlines grants 50% concession on domestic fares to senior citizens, cancer patients, blind persons and the persons suffering from 80% and above locomotor disability.

(b) to (e) Free or concessional air passages are granted to bonafide patients and one or two attendants undergoing medical treatment abroad for which facilities are not available in India. These passages are released on the recommendations of the Director General of Health Services. In accordance with these guidelines and the requests received, Air India had issued two tickets during the year April, 2003 - March, 2004. Similarly, Indian Airlines had issued four tickets during the year 2002-03.